

The Flow of Legislation Through the Committee Process

The Bill is printed...

After a bill is printed, it is distributed to members of the Legislature and made available to the public. Notice of the bill will appear in the House or Senate calendar--usually on the first Legislative day after it is printed. That notice will include the bill's "LD" number, its title and the suggested Committee of Reference.

The Bill is referred to Committee...

Both Houses of the Legislature must agree on the Committee of Reference before a bill is referred to a Committee.

If it's a "House Bill".....

If it's a "Senate Bill".....

A bill is a "House Bill" if the sponsor is a member of the House. House bills are referenced first in the House...

.. then in the Senate.

in the House first...

in the Senate first...

A bill is a "Senate Bill" if the sponsor of the bill is a member of the Senate. Senate bills are referenced first in the Senate....

.. then in the House.

...then in the Senate

...then in the House

Bill goes to Committee...

The bill is "in Committee" when referencing is complete and the Committee clerk takes physical possession of the bill.

Planning and Scheduling...

Chairs are responsible for planning and scheduling public hearings and work sessions on bills. Nonpartisan staff can assist Chairs with planning and scheduling.

A Public Hearing is Advertised...

With few exceptions, every bill gets a public hearing. The time, date and location of each public hearing is advertised in the weekend editions of newspapers in Portland, Lewiston and Bangor. Unless a waiver is obtained from both presiding officers, hearings must be advertised two weekends in advance of the hearing date.

A Public Hearing is held...

Public hearings provide interested persons the opportunity to express to the Committee their views on the proposed legislation. Protocol for public hearings vary somewhat among Committees. Committees typically hear numerous bills in one day; hearing rooms are often crowded.

Work Session(s) are held...

Work sessions--there may be several on any bill--are the Committee's opportunity to deliberate and discuss the merits of the bill. Protocol for work sessions vary somewhat among Committees, but work sessions are primarily for discussion of the bill among members of the Committee. Permission of the Committee is usually required for a person to present additional information or ask questions during a work session.

The Committee Votes...

When a Committee finishes "working" a bill, the Chairs entertain motions and conduct the Committee vote(s) according to applicable rules of order. A quorum (7 members including at least one Senator) is required to vote. The Committee Clerk is responsible for recording the vote, for preparing the jacket(s) and obtaining signatures of committee members, as required.

A unanimous report?

A divided report?

If the Committee vote is not unanimous, one or more minority reports are required. All reports on any legislative document must be submitted to the Legislature at the same time. Each report in a divided report requires a separate vote.

Unless the Committee's report is a unanimous "Ought Not to Pass", some form of amendment is usually required--even if it's just adding a fiscal note to the bill. After the vote(s), the Committee Analyst ensures that the Committee amendment is properly drafted and prepared for being reported out of Committee. The time to complete this step varies, depending on the Committee's workload and the complexity of the amendment.

Finalizing the Committee's Report(s)

The Bill is "reported out" of Committee...

When the Committee's amendment is complete, the Committee Clerk picks up the amendments at the Revisor's Office. The Committee Clerk is then responsible for delivering the Committee's report(s) in their signed jackets to the House (if it's a House Bill) or to the Senate (if it's a Senate Bill). Once a bill is "reported out of Committee", the Committee may take no further action on it unless the bill is sent back to committee by both bodies.